

THE BAPTIST Record

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MBC officer pioneers Hispanic ministry

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

Before Joel Medina was elected second vice-president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention (MBC) on October 26, he and his wife Damaris were busy about the work of planting Hispanic churches in Mississippi.

Medina is pastor of Iglesia Internacional Las Americas in Carthage, but the church is just one of the many highlights of his work among Hispanics in the state.

The work in Carthage was established on July 11, 1998. "That was the date of our first service," said Medina, "but we had been working in Forest since 1996. I was helping the pastor of the Forest Hispanic work, but because of an incident there all the Hispanics were spread out from there. We focused on building a permanent building in Forest. About a year later the director of missions, Joe Abel, invited us to get involved in Carthage, because there were so many Hispanics moving into the area."

"Our first service was with seven people, including my wife and my mother," Medina recalled. "Now we are averaging more than 50 people each Sunday. We have worship services in Kosciusko, because they have the facilities to provide room for our children. We have people from three counties: Madison, Attala, and Leake."

Medina has been able to offer a discipleship training class in Canton on Tuesday nights, focusing on four men living there, to train them to be leaders in cell groups. On Wednesday mornings, Medina does the same in Carthage at the associational building. Damaris has a woman's cell group in Kosciusko on Wednesday nights.

"Through this ministry, we have great goals to accomplish," he said. "We have two pastors in Mexico, two deacons in Guatemala, and a music director in Guatemala. We've had 200 decisions for Christ in six years, and 600 people have visited."



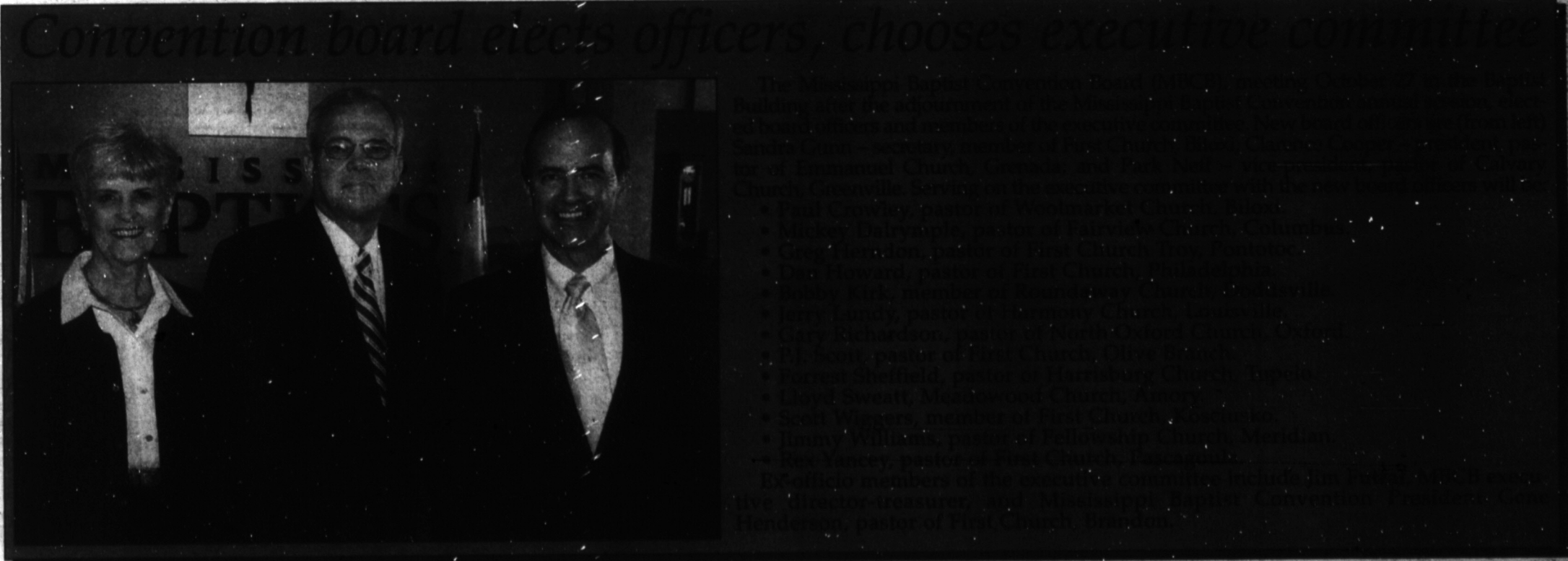
ROOM TO GROW — Joel Medina (left), pastor of Iglesia Internacional Las Americas in Carthage and newly-elected second vice-president of the Mississippi Baptist Convention, surveys with his wife Damaris the future site of the Hispanic mission in Carthage that will serve three counties. The land was provided through the generosity of cooperating Baptist churches in the area. Joel Medina is the first Hispanic officer in the history of the Mississippi Baptist Convention. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Land has been purchased for the mission in Carthage by local churches through Leake Association, for a permanent building close to the local Wal-Mart. The church is in the process of raising funds for the building. "We won't be a traditional building, but something that blends in with the community with a multipurpose building. We want to be able to train people for ministry in the Hispanic community," said Medina.

Medina estimates there are close to 1100 Hispanics in Carthage, 1500 Hispanics in Canton, and a few in Kosciusko. Still, that is more than 3000 people to be reached by

one church. "Carthage is a good central location," he said, "but we would love to plant churches in other areas."

Ed Deuschle, Director of Church Planting for the Miss. Baptist Convention Board, said, "We were able to put Joel through our Basic Training classes for church planting. Joel has pastored in two different sites, in Kosciusko and Carthage. Mississippi Baptists, through our department, have supported him as a planter in both those locations. We've had that relationship for four years." The Margaret Lackey State Mission Offering supports Medina's work and other church plants in Mississippi.



Convention board elects officers, chooses executive committee

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Redefining ignorance

It has been an amusing few weeks, watching the news media elitists sputtering through their contorted explanations of why they weren't really wrong about the November 2 election outcome and sounding the alarm against what they perceive as the impending takeover of the country by ignorant religious extremists.

When surveys and polls indicated that many Americans placed "moral values" at the top of the list of why they voted as they did on November 2, the chattering class went to work with a fury usually reserved for the times when they are served the incorrect wine with dinner in a Manhattan restaurant.

Garry Wills, a Northeastern University history professor and New York Times commentator, wrote in the Times the day after the election, "Can a people that believes more fervently in the Virgin Birth than in evolution be called an Enlightened nation?" He went on to compare politically-active American Christians to Al-Qaeda terrorists by explaining why the rest of the world sees the U.S. as dangerous: "They fear jihad, no matter whose zeal is being expressed."

The last time I checked, I didn't recall reading any news stories about American Christians flying airliners into skyscrapers. No matter; liberals and secularists have never allowed truth to get in the way of a good story.

Not to be outdone, Times columnist Maureen Dowd opined on November 7 that the "new evangelicals" have an innate fear of scientific progress, "as with stem cell research," and they object to efforts aimed at helping "society's most vulnerable: the poor, the sick, the sexually different," because George W. Bush stirred "our nasty devils."

"We're entering another dark age," she warned, without elaborating. Perhaps the gentle lady has forgotten that virtually all the early American schools that are now the greatest centers of higher learning in the world were started by religious leaders — Harvard and Yale universities, to name only a couple. Obviously, Christians

weren't then and aren't now uneducated or incapable of complex thought.

Incredibly, Dowd herself holds an undergraduate degree from Catholic University in Washington D.C. Garry Wills has a doctoral degree from Yale University. If America is entering a dark age, it won't be the Christians who put us there — but it could well be the enlightened Christian populace that gets us out of it.

Novelist Jane Smiley continues the concept of Christian as extremist in the November 4 edition of online magazine Slate. "Ignorance and bloodlust have a long tradition in the United States, especially in the red states (those states won by George W. Bush)," she writes.

"Here is how ignorance works: First, they put the fear of God into you — if you don't believe in the literal word of the Bible, you will burn in hell. Of course, the literal word of the Bible is tremendously contradictory, and so you must abdicate all critical thinking, and accept a simple but logical system of belief that is dangerous to question. A corollary to this point is that they make sure you understand that Satan resides in the toils and snares of complex thought and so it is best not try it."

"...The history of the last four years shows that red state types, above all, do not want to be told what to do — they prefer to be ignorant. As a result, they are virtually unteachable," Smiley writes.

From her comfortable California redoubt, Smiley seems to have forgotten that she holds an undergraduate degree from Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New

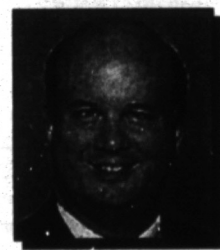


York. Coincidentally, Vassar College was founded in 1860 by prominent Baptist and civic leader Matthew Vassar, who said, "It is my hope to be the instrument in the hands of Providence, of founding and perpetuating an institution which shall accomplish for young women what our colleges are accomplishing for young men."

In their elitist snobbery the pseudo-intelligentsia in this country have conveniently overlooked the fact that they owe a lot to Christians, who are inarguably some of the brightest and most educated people in the world — including but certainly not limited to Southern Baptists.

It all kind of makes you wonder who is really ignorant, doesn't it?

GUEST OPINION:



Our churches and the matter of values

By Tony Martin, Associate Editor

ity of Americans do cling to historical, traditional morals."

So if we're such a moral, values-conscious nation, why are churches declining? In our own beloved Southern Baptist Convention, we're baptizing fewer people and participation in tried-and-true ministries is shrinking. You'd think that our churches would be growing explosively. Where's the disconnect here?

If values matter, many of our churches are doing a poor job of serving as custodians of those values, or else we are presenting them in a fashion that is unpalatable. I'm not advocating watering down the Gospel, nor backing down from the authoritative Word of God, but I suggest that we make sure we are relevant.

The message is relevant, and the Word of God stands forever, but could it be possible that we preach values without actually living them out?

Consider the person who is dealing with the claims of Christianity and is moving toward a life-changing decision to receive Christ. Then he visits church. He sees a man in leadership at the church, and knows that this man has been unscrupulous in his business dealings. He sees another man taking up the offering, and knows the man is a big tippler at the country club after a round of golf.

This person may have personal values, but he doesn't see them demonstrated in the church of Jesus Christ. He decides that his values aren't consistent with

what he sees in the lifestyle of Christians, and determines that being moral is enough. After all, he's better than those churchgoers he's observed outside church, isn't he?

Let's I be accused of being a cynic, I know that there are plenty of fine churches, populated by those who are seeking God's best. I also know that a church is a place for sinners. What concerns me is when we allow people with known sinful lifestyles to occupy places of leadership. I'll grant that even leaders stumble and fall, but I'd feel more comfortable if I saw evidence of repentance afterwards.

Relevance simply means having integrity in a world where there are few absolutes. Relevance transcends such transitory trends as worship music, seeker sensitivity, and the like. If it's real, it's relevant. If a church is relevant, it will attract people — lost people.

The results of the presidential vote demonstrate that the majority of the American people are looking for a safe haven for themselves and their families in an immoral world. God grant that our churches provide just that.

Evangelical voters turn out on election day

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — In 2000, an estimated 15 million evangelicals voted. This year, that number jumped to more than 27 million. It's safe to say that the emphasis on moral issues worked — led in part by the iVoteValues initiative.

More than 61,000 new voters were registered this year through the iVoteValues effort both online and through the iVoteValues 18-wheeler truck. In addition, it distributed 90,500 bulletin inserts as well as some 306,000 party platform comparison guides.

More than that, the campaign helped focus the nation's attention on moral issues instead of pocketbook issues. Developed by the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC), the iVoteValues initiative also was promoted by Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council.

Two largely identical websites — iVoteValues.com and iVoteValues.org — provided information about various issues and also allowed people to register to vote. Each website received more than 200,000 visits for a total of approximately 400,000.

"There is no question that American voters were sensitized to the importance of voting their values," said ERLC President Richard Land.

In fact, iVoteValues officials believe their efforts easily could have resulted in hundreds of thousands of newly registered voters. Some 38,000 voter registration forms were downloaded, and those forms could have been copied and given to family members and friends. Also, Focus on the Family mailed out 1.3 million registration forms to its constituents in the final months of the election. The ERLC mailed out 15,000.

Moral issues played a significant role in the election outcome. Exit polls showed that "moral values" — undefined in the questionnaire — were the top issue for 22% of voters. Values ranked first, ahead of the economy/jobs (20%), terrorism (19%) and Iraq (15%). Among those listing moral values as their top issue, 80% voted for Bush and 18% for Kerry.

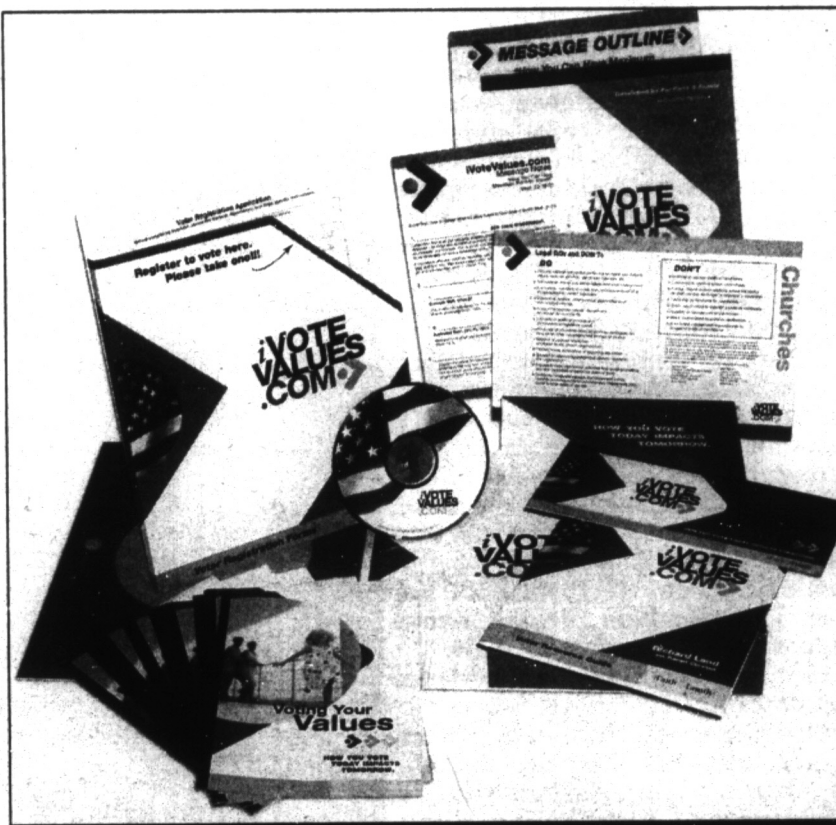
In the days following the election, political strategists and media pundits have examined the issue of morality and values voters — both of which received scant attention prior to Election Day.

"While the national news media may have been surprised with that finding [moral values topping the list], I knew in my heart American families are troubled over the state of our culture," Land told Baptist Press. "Efforts like the iVoteValues initiative were used by God to convict and remind Americans of faith that they had an obligation and the right to have their faith inform their voting decisions."

"It is not overstating the election results, both in the presidential and U.S. Senate contests, to say that traditional religious values won the day, and that much of the credit goes to voters who heard the message that voting your values, beliefs and convictions is best for America."

Exit polls showed that nearly one-fourth of voters — 23% — called themselves evangelicals and/or born again Christians. Among those voters, 78% voted for Bush and 21% for Kerry.

In fact, exit polling showed a "religious gap" between Bush and Kerry, with churchgoers more likely to vote for the president and secular voters more likely to vote for Kerry. According to the exit polling data, Bush led 64-35% among



those who attend church more than one time a week, and 58-41% among those who attend church once a week. In both categories, Bush saw a one percent increase from 2000.

Among those who never attend church, Kerry led 62-36%.

The showing by Bush among churchgoers came as same-sex marriage — mostly a non-issue in 2000 — dominated the values debate. Thanks to a ruling by its high court in May, Massachusetts became the first state to legalize same-sex marriage. In a backlash, 11 states followed by placing state constitutional amendments banning "gay marriage" on their ballots. All of them passed with an average of 70.1%.

Mississippi voters ratified an amendment to their constitution, limiting the definition of marriage to the union of one man and one woman, by nearly 86% of all ballots cast.

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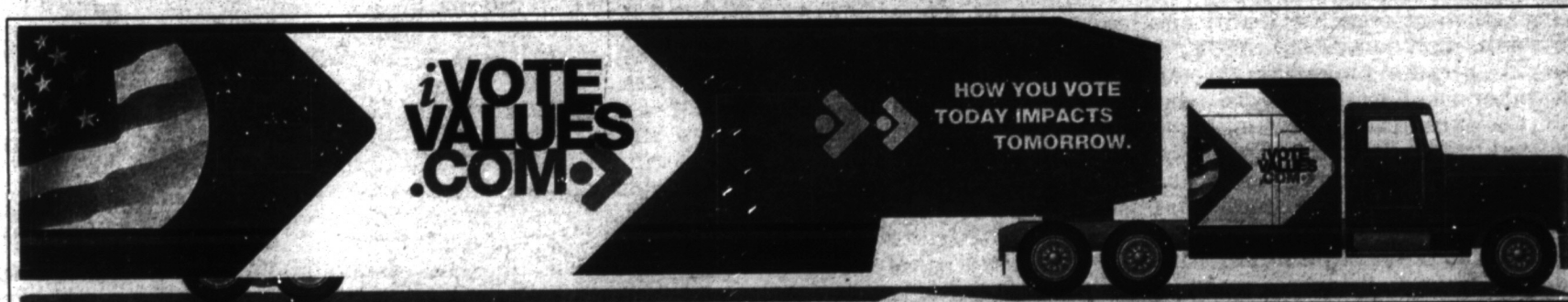
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Bush supports a marriage amendment to the U.S. Constitution and frequently mentioned values issues during the campaign, particularly the marriage issue and his desire to build a "culture of life" in America.

It is not the first time that moral values have topped the list of issues, though. In the 2000 campaign, a Los Angeles Times exit poll showed "moral/ethical values" topping the list, with 35% of voters saying it was most important. Among them, 55% voted for Bush, 32% for Ralph Nader and 17% for Gore.



Lawsuit quickly filed

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP and local reports) — Voters in 11 states on Election Day passed constitutional amendments banning same-sex marriage, including Mississippi, but all of them could be overturned if a lawsuit filed in federal court November 3 succeeds. Two lesbian couples filed suit in a Tulsa, Okla., federal court against the federal Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), a 1996 law that gives states the option of not recognizing another state's same-sex marriages. If the lawsuit is successful, then all 50 states could be forced to legalize same-sex marriage. It is the seventh federal lawsuit against the Defense of Marriage Act and it comes as the same-sex marriage issue is being cited as a reason for social conservative victories nationwide. The 11 amendments passed with an average of 70.1% of the vote; in Mississippi the vote was nearly 86%. The state marriage amendments prevent state courts from legalizing same-sex marriage like Massachusetts high court did. The amendments, though, are vulnerable in federal court.

Looking back

10 years ago

Mississippi Baptists, meeting in their 159th annual session, decline after intense debate to change the way they fund Mississippi College and agree to extend the sale of Clarke College in Newton another 60 days.

20 years ago

Southern Baptist and National Baptist women gather in Laurel to observe the annual Baptist Women's World Day of Prayer, attended last year by more than 450 people from the southeast Mississippi area.

50 years ago

For the first time in Southern Seminary history, the school will close for one week so that its students can devote the period to evangelism. The unprecedented closing will come during the simultaneous revival crusade and students will not be charged with absences that week.

New web site aimed at youth ministry plans

FORT WORTH, Texas (BP) — Youth pastors who need help programming, scheduling, and administering their youth ministries have a new online resource in www.SBCstudents.com.

The resources at SBCstudents.com, some of which would cost hundreds of dollars if purchased, are available at no charge to all who visit, register and use the site, which was developed by Richard Ross, professor of student ministry at Southwestern Seminary, and students in the student ministry department at the Fort Worth, Texas, campus.

Ross said SBCstudents.com provides access to "every SBC printed resource used in youth ministry, every SBC youth ministry event and conference, every SBC national, state and seminary leader in youth ministry and every SBC state youth ministry homepage."

Ross said the SBCstudents.com project has the support of the youth professors of all SBC seminaries and the youth employees of national SBC entities and Baptist state conventions, who will make decisions about the content of the site during an annual meeting they hold annually.

"This is the only source in existence for churches to see the Mission Statement, Values, and Strategies of SBC student ministry," Ross said, noting that attendees at the annual meetings "spent hours and hours crafting these."

Ross added that SBCstudents.com can provide special help to small churches. "The volunteers in those smallest churches seldom get word on conferences, mission trips, resources or training events," he said. "The SBC has no other delivery system to get comprehensive help to them than our website."

SS teacher honored for continuous service

By Tony Martin
Associate Editor

While many churches take the opportunity to recognize and commend Sunday School teachers, Oak Grove Church in Meridian had something special to celebrate August 15.

During the Sunday morning worship service, Pastor Roy Dabbs called one particular Sunday School teacher to the front for special recognition.

Holding a presentation plaque, Dabbs said, "Appreciation award presented to Mrs. Ruth Adkins for 72 years of Christian service at Oak Grove Baptist Church, Meridian, Mississippi: Thanks for the love, time, and talents you have given to hundreds through your teaching of Sunday School. We thank God for you. The members of Oak Grove Baptist Church, August 15, 2004."

Her class was 100% in attendance that day, too.

Other recognition came from Wayne Edwards, missions director for Lauderdale Association in Meridian, and Kiely Young, director of the Sunday School Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB).

The certificate for exemplary service from the Lauderdale Association read, in part, "Congratulations for 72 years of outstanding service as a teacher in Sunday School. You have influenced many individuals by your wonderful example of your faithfulness in sharing your wisdom through the Bible study lessons. I pray that your example may be an inspiration to others to commit themselves to God's service. On behalf of the 42 other churches and two missions in the Lauderdale Association, we congratulate you."



FAITHFUL SERVICE — Roy Dabbs (right), pastor of Oak Grove Church in Meridian, presents Ruth Adkins with a plaque on August 15 commending her for 72 years of teaching Sunday School at the church. (Photo by Tony Martin)

Adkins is 86 years of age; Oak Grove Church is approximately 128 years old. For 72 of those years, Adkins has been teaching Sunday School at the same church. Adkins became a Sunday School teacher at age 15, beginning with what was then called the cradle roll, working with babies.

Over the years, she also taught in the "primary" department, rotating between the two areas. After beginning teaching, she never attended a class of any kind as a student.

Adkins graduated from high school and continued to teach. She worked as a billing clerk at Acme Building Supply. In 1937, she married her late husband Cecil. Cecil Adkins taught the adult men's classes.

After years of working with children, Adkins began teaching young adult women, and has been teaching that age ever since. The class actually spans the age range between 40-60, according to Dabbs, and, "there may even be some younger than that in there. Anybody's welcome."

Dabbs stated that Oak Grove is an old community. "I'm guessing that the average age of the folks living around here is 70. We don't have many young people or children much around this area but the Lord has shown me that even if your church is in an old community, it doesn't mean that you can't thrive and survive."

"If you let your light shine bright enough, someone is going to see it." Dabbs makes it a point to aggressively involve his congregation in discipleship training and Sunday evening worship. The prior Sunday, the church had 92 people in discipleship training. "I just try to give people a reason to want to come back Sunday evenings," he said.

The church still has an ancient bell in its steeple to summon people to Bible study and worship. It even tolls prior to funerals.

Someone asked Dabbs if Adkins' tenure as a teacher was a record. "It may not be a record," said Dabbs, "but it sure isn't an average."

Ministers report divorce as top threat to family

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Divorce, negative influences from the media, and materialism are among the most common threats to the family cited by Protestant ministers in a recent study.

Ellison Research, a full-service marketing research firm in Phoenix that conducted the research for the November/December issue of LifeWay's Facts & Trends magazine, reported that divorce was listed as one of the top three concerns by 43% of all ministers surveyed while 38% cited the media as a key issue they need to guard families in their communities against and 36% said materialism.

Other matters of concern included absentee fathers, cited by 24% of respondents, and families that lack a stay-at-home parent, noted by 22% of ministers.

Among Southern Baptists, the top five issues of concern were divorce (53%), negative influences from the media (38%), materialism (36%), absentee fathers (29%) and latch-key kids (23%), the study found.

Ellison noticed Methodists paid particular attention to parental alcohol and drug use as well as economic issues

while seeing less of a threat from pornography and absentee fathers. Lutherans were more concerned with the impact of materialism and alcohol use by parents and children and were less worried about absentee fathers and latch-key kids.

Pentecostals, the study said, were less concerned than average about materialism and were more concerned that morality is not being taught in schools. Southern Baptists, meanwhile, were more concerned about divorce and less likely to worry about economic issues.

"The level of threat each issue represented often differed from region to region, and no threat was named among the top three by even half of all pastors," Ron Sellers, president of Ellison Research, said.

"Obviously the threats to families differ considerably from one community to the next. An upscale suburban community may be threatened most by materialism or latch-key kids, while a rural area may have real problems with poverty or alcoholism," he said. "This could make any nationwide or large-scale initiatives to deal with these problems a

challenge, or at least lead to very spotty success."

The study also asked ministers to agree or disagree with three statements about family. A majority agreed with the statement, "Churches tend to focus so much on 'traditional' families that they do not serve important groups such as singles, childless couples, or single parents appropriately."

Ellison found that 12% agreed strongly with that statement, 48% agreed somewhat, 26% disagreed somewhat and 14% disagreed strongly. Southern Baptists were less likely than average to have this perspective, the study said.

Regarding the statement, "Like it or not, the traditional view of family (husband, wife and children) no longer really exists in American society," about half of ministers agreed. Again, Southern Baptists were less likely than average to agree.

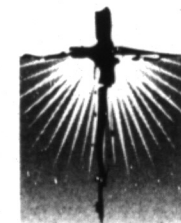
When asked about the statement, "No matter how society defines family, churches need to promote a traditional view of family (husband, wife and children)," 71% agreed strongly.

Ellison Research said its sample of 695 Protestant min-

isters included only those who are actively leading churches. The study's total sample is accurate to within plus or minus 3.6 percentage points at the 95% confidence level with a 50% response distribution.

The study was conducted in all 50 states, using a representative sample of pastors from all Protestant denominations. Respondents' geography, church size and denomination were tracked for appropriate representation and accuracy.

More data from this study is available at www.ellisonresearch.com/PastorStudy.htm.



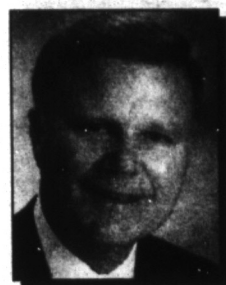
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LIVING IN A BULLRING

Years ago when I was playing football, from time to time at practice the coach would call all the linemen together and we would form a bullring. That's what the coach called it. He would have us get in a big circle and then one player would be put out in the middle and we would number off — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, — all around the circle. The coach would stand on the side and call out one number after another. The guy in the center of the ring was a target to be hit by the person whose number was called. One number after another was called and the poor fellow in the center never knew from what direction he would be hit from next. He just had to be as alert as possible and fend off whoever was going to be charging at him from whatever direction.

The object of the exercise was to somewhat create game conditions, because in real live football you never know who is going to hit you from what side. The bullring could actually be fun if you weren't the guy in the center. If you were the guy in the middle, it didn't take long to figure out this was not a whole lot of fun. In one moment you are hit head-on, the next moment you are being hit from one side, and the next moment



Directions

Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

you may be hit from various other angles. It just keeps on coming as the coach continues calling out the numbers.

Once I moved on from being a football participant to become a football spectator, I thought that I was away from the bullring but lo and behold, like many of you, it has returned in my life. It is pretty amazing in this technological age of all the different directions stuff can come at us. The more convenient communication techniques become the more complicated our lives become. Just think of all of the ways that information, requests, advertisements, offers, and demands are coming at the average person. A telephone, a cell phone, a fax machine, a computer for your e-mail, and then there is regular mail, and sometimes UPS or FedEx kind of mail, and hand-delivered mail, and on top of that there may be somebody just standing and knocking at your door.

There is no way to know from what direction the next ring-ding, pop-up, or knock will come, but you can be con-

fident that somebody will be pulling in one direction or pushing in the other direction as the day moves along. In a world overloaded with modern conveniences, you can be wired-up, stressed-out, and often knocked down in dozens of different ways. So what do you do when you are living in the bullring of life?

First of all you need to **stay alert**. You may not know what or when but be assured something is going to hit you. So you might as well brace for it. Beyond that you need to **seek to prioritize**. With all the things that are happening around you and things that are coming at you, it is important to realize that some things are not very important — especially as you view them in light of the circumstances that may surround you that are filled with so many of the really important things. The person who has just received word that they have cancer is not likely to be overly concerned about a hangnail on their little finger. There are

times when hangnails get a lot of attention but not when really important things are pressing around you. So seek to see and understand the vital things that are part of your life and let the rest of it go.

From time to time another important thing to do is just **get out of the bullring of life**. How? Where do you go? What do you do? Please understand there has to be a place in life, a quiet zone, a prayer closet, or somewhere that you do not have to carry your cell phone and you are not interrupted every three to four seconds. Nobody can live in that highly stimulated, overwhelming stress kind of environment for very long. Even if it goes on for days there still has to be some way, some day that you can get out of the pressures and find relief. Even if you can't go anywhere physically you need to keep in mind that it was our Lord Jesus who said, "My peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth give I unto you." Find that kind of calmness in your heart that only God can bring.

There are times that Jesus will come to us and still the storm. There are other times, maybe more frequent, that He will come and still us in the storm. He can and He does make a difference.

The author may be contacted at P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. E-mail: jfutral@mbcb.org.



YOU CAN RESPOND RIGHT NOW!

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you.
(*I have sinned.*)
 2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death.
(*I repent.*)
 3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you.
(*I believe in Jesus.*)
 4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him.
(*I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.*)
- But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name
(*John 1:12*).

If you make a decision for Jesus Christ today, contact a local Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

Booklet provides advice on call to ministry

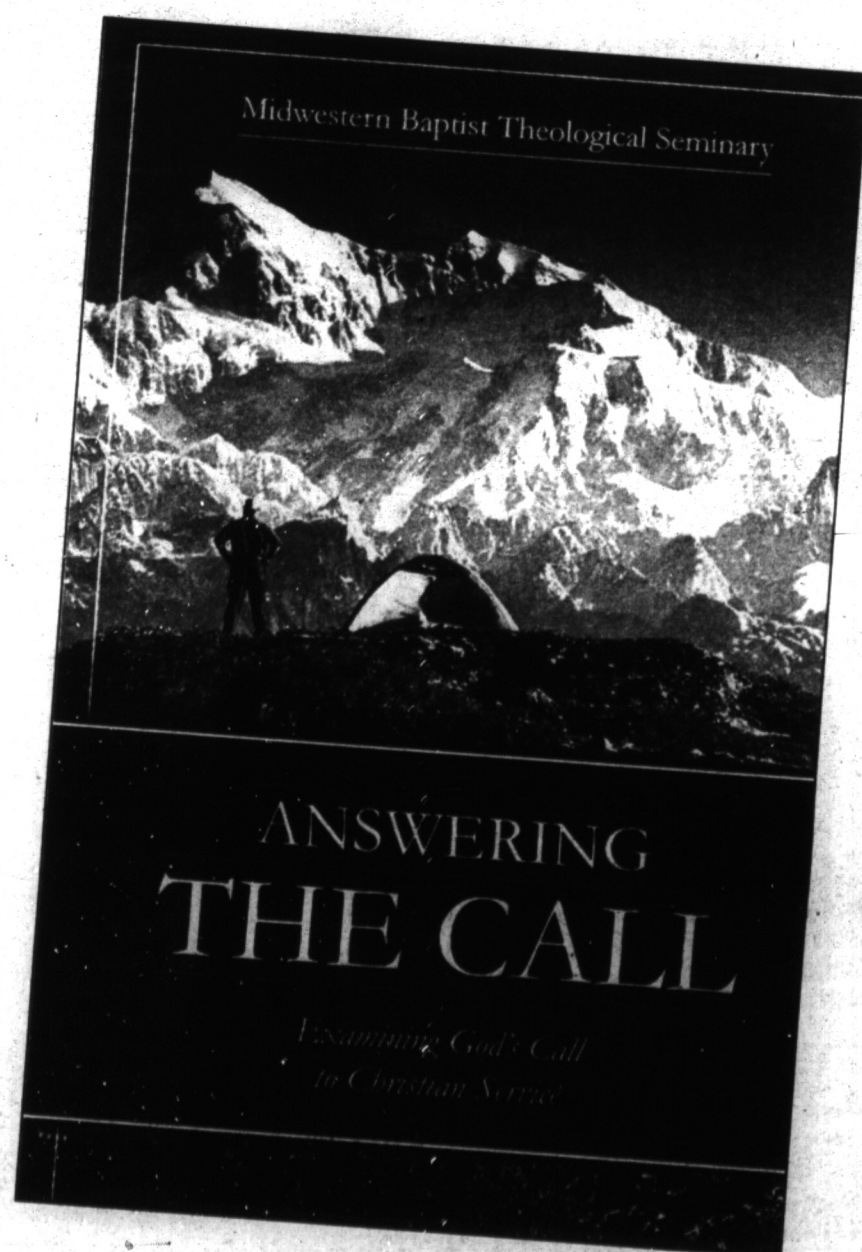
KANSAS CITY, Mo. (BP) — Is God calling you to vocational Christian service? In a newly published booklet from Midwestern Seminary, Don Whitney, associate professor of spiritual formation, helps Christians answer that question by offering a biblical look at God's call to Christian ministry.

In the 42-page booklet, *Answering the Call: Examining God's Call to Christian Vocational Service*, Whitney explains the "twin features" of God's call.

"God's call to preach His Word is much more than a personal spiritual experience," writes Whitney, who is also the author of *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. "When God calls a man to the Gospel ministry He calls him both internally and externally."

In the featured chapter of the booklet, Whitney also explains that God's call to Christian vocational ministry is also a call to prepare.

"Would you want a physician who'd had no preparation? Preparation is even more important for a physician of souls," Whitney writes. "Develop your spiritual disciplines, especially those of the Word and prayer. Devote yourself to your local church. Find a place to teach there. Study the Bible and theology as much as you can. Seriously consider enrolling in a solid seminary."



Also included in the booklet are chapters by other Midwestern professors devoted to helping God-called men and women pursue seminary training. The booklet also includes:

- **What You'll Learn At Seminary**, a chapter by Thorvald Madsen, Midwestern's vice president of academic development, who looks at key areas of biblical training offered at seminary and why they are necessary for those called to ministry.

- **Why Go To Seminary?**, a chapter by Alan Branch, vice president of student development, who presents a list of common objections to attending seminary with responses to each.

- **How Do I Finance My Education?**, a chapter by N.S.R.K. Ravi, vice president of business services/institutional advancement, that offers biblical advice about financial stewardship and common ways students pay for seminary training.

The free booklet is available by contacting Midwestern Seminary at (800) 944-MBTS or online at <http://www.mbst.edu/called>. Midwestern Seminary, in Kansas City, Missouri, is one of the six Southern Baptist seminaries supported by gifts to the Cooperative Program.

J.E. Welch, retired pastor, dies Oct. 24

James E. Welch, 75, of Sherman, died October 24 at the North Mississippi Medical Center after a lengthy illness. Services were held October 26 at the Jefferson Street Chapel of W.E. Pegues with Tommy Vinson and Don Smith officiating. Burial followed in the Sherman Cemetery.

Welch attended Clark Junior College, Mississippi College, and NOBTS. Throughout his 57 years in the ministry he pastored 11 churches in Mississippi and Tennessee. He retired in 2002 and remained a member of Oak Hill Church, Pontotoc County.

Survivors include his wife of 52 years, Lucy Vinson Welch; one daughter, Sharon Murphy; two sons, Jim Welch and Jerry V. Welch; one brother, Earnest Lee Welch; and five grandchildren.

MS POSITIONS

MAIN STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, Goodman, Miss., is currently seeking a full-time pastor. A traditional SBC, resident membership 95. Send resumes or contact to Main Street Baptist Church, pastor search committee, Billy May, chairman, P.O. Box 206, Goodman, MS 39079.

IS MUSIC YOUR MINISTRY? Do you have a heart for youth? Immanuel Baptist Church, Vicksburg, Miss., is accepting resumes for minister of music/youth/education. Send to personnel committee chairman, Immanuel Baptist Church, 6949 Hwy 61 South, Vicksburg, MS 39180.

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, CORINTH, Miss., seeks full-time Associate pastor for Christian education & administration. Position responsible for overall church programs and church affairs administration. FBC has 825 resident members. Successful candidate will be seminary graduate with excellent interpersonal skills and experience in similar position. Mail resumes to FBC search committee, 501 Main Street, Corinth, MS 38834.

EAST PHILADELPHIA BAPTIST CHURCH is seeking a full-time youth minister. Please send resume to East Philadelphia Baptist Church, P.O. Box 304, Philadelphia, MS 39350.

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New Hope Church, Foxworth, will ordain **Lars Stensland III** to the ministry November 21 at 6:30 p.m. A meal will follow. All ordained men are invited to attend. Tim Parker is pastor.

Williamsville Church, Kosciusko, recently held a deacon ordination for two new deacons. Pictured are **Kenneth Ashmore, Sr.** with his wife June, and **Mark Threet** with his wife Connie.

Calvary Church, Columbus, recognized **Frankie Harpole** for fifty years as church organist recently. Pictured (from left) are **Nick Cannady,** pastor, and **Harpole.**

Cedar View Church, Olive Branch, will hold a

community sing featuring the **Inmans** Nov. 20 at 6 p.m. Call (662) 895-2661 for information.

First Church, Madison, will hold Hanging of the Green November 28 at 8:30, 9:45, and 11 a.m. A Madison Christmas will be presented December 3 and 5 at 7 p.m. and Angel Alert December 12

at 6:30 p.m. For more information, call (601) 856-6177.

The **Congregational Care/Prayer of First Church, Jackson,** will sponsor **Reflections On a Celebration,** a time to honor deceased loved ones, December 14 at 6 p.m. A reception will follow. For more information, call (601) 949-1907. Admission is free.

First Church, Aberdeen, and **First Church, Columbus,** are serving this week as shoe-box collection points for Operation Christmas Child, a ministry of Samaritan's Purse. Collection points are being set up nationwide. For more information and to find a local collection point, visit www.samaritan.org.



Nick Cannady, pastor and Frankie Harpole



Kenneth & June Ashmore and Mark & Connie Threet

COLLEGE & SEMINARY NEWS

The **William Carey College Speech and Debate Team** won two overall sweepstakes awards at the Louisiana Tech and University of Louisiana Swing Tournaments recently. WCC also placed fourth overall in debate. Their first place at Louisiana Tech was a tie with the University of Louisiana Monroe. The Crusaders will compete at the Louisiana State University Shreveport Tournament November 19-21.

The **William Carey College Cheerleaders and Men's Basketball Team** will host **Carey Hoops at the Mall** November 20 from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. in the Turtle Creek Mall, Hattiesburg. Events include face painting, a basketball exhibition with the men's team, autographs with free posters, group cheers, and free game schedules. This is a free event and will be held in front of Dillard's.

William Carey College's Aguado Guitar Club will sponsor the annual Classical Guitar Competition December 4 in the Thomas Fine Arts Building, Hattiesburg campus. The competition is divided into three categories: pre-college, adult, and junior college. **Miroslav Loncar,** director of the competition and artist in residence at WCC, and his wife **Natasa Klasinc** will conduct master classes for intermediate and advanced students. For more information or to obtain an application, contact **Miroslav Loncar,** William Carey College, 498 Tuscan Avenue, Hattiesburg, MS 39401, call (601) 318-6417, or email miroslav.loncar@wmcarey.edu. Entries are due December 1.

MBCB recently held the annual Church-Related Vocations banquet at Blue

Mountain College. Seven scholarships are awarded yearly to CRV students attending Mississippi Baptist colleges. Pictured (from left) are **Ryan Bird,** West Point, who received the Clawson scholarship; **Doug Bain,** professor and chairman of the Department of Biblical and Associated Studies; and **Randy Williamson,** Sidon, who received the Washburn scholarship.

Bobby Chain recently presented Church-Related Vocation students at William Carey College with copies of **Bob Pittman's** biography, *Chosen: The Mission and Message of Frank Pollard,* before the monthly CRV meeting, Hattiesburg campus. Pictured (from left) are **John Blackmon,** Daniel Caldwell, Chain, Pittman, and **Larry Kennedy,** president of WCC.



Bird, Bain, and Williamson



Blackmon, Caldwell, Chain, Pittman, and Kennedy

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JUST FOR THE RECORD



Steele Church Baby Dedication, Scott Association

Steele Church, Scott Association, held a baby dedication recently. Pictured (from left) are Nathaniel Keith Williams, son of Jason and Cassie; Hunter Seth Harris, son of Seth and Susan; and Lacey Alana Dolan, daughter of Kris and Amanda. Reggie Williams is pastor.

The GAs and Mission Friends of Steele Church, Scott Association, recently worked on

their mission project, Operation Thank You. They prepared care bags for soldiers as they board planes to Iraq. Pictured (from left) are Gabriel Bufkin, Wayland Crimm, Britney Sharp, Kaylee Sharp, and Amber Self.

First, Foxworth, ordained Hugh Gene Smith and Mike Windham as deacons June 13. Pictured, front, from left, are Hugh Gene and Dianne Smith

and Tracey and Mike Windham. Back row, Archie Herring and Ladell Blanton.

Freeny Church, Carthage, recently held a child/baby dedication service. Pictured are the participants. John Adams is pastor.

The GAs (pictured) of First Church, McComb, recently collected food for the hungry and donated it to Pike County Association.

Dry Creek Church, Simpson Association, recently held their GA recognition service. Pictured are those receiving awards.

Red Banks Church, Marshall County Association, recently held a ribbon cutting ceremony for their new multi-purpose building. Pictured (from left) are Mike Roberts, Casey Roberts, Andy Skelton, Jon Woods, Lem Rappa, Robert Mayer, Troy Defer, pastor, Ken Nichols, Mark Watkins, and Jamie Rappa.

New Prospect Church, Brookhaven, held a deacon ordination November 7. Pictured (from left) are Tim McDowell, Willie Welch, pastor, and Marlon Granger.

John Jerry Smith, minister of music at New Prospect Church, Brookhaven, celebrated 50 years in service October 10. He is pictured with his wife Peggy.



Steele Church GAs and Mission Friends, Scott Association



Dry Creek Church GAs, Simpson Association



New Prospect Church Deacon Ordination, Brookhaven



Deacons & wives of First Church, Foxworth

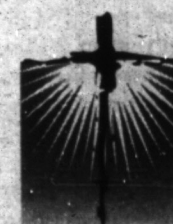


John Jerry and Peggy Smith



First Church GAs, McComb

Homecoming
Fairview, Indiana
Homecoming November 21
worship, 10:30 a.m.; lunch will follow; all are invited.



MISSISSIPPI
BAPTISTS



Red Banks Church Ribbon Cutting, Marshall Association



Freeny Church Baby Dedication, Carthage

More states to consider amendments

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — Galvanized by results on Election Day, when all 11 bans on same-sex "marriage" passed, legislators and pro-family groups in at least seven additional states say they will push for constitutional marriage amendments in the coming months.

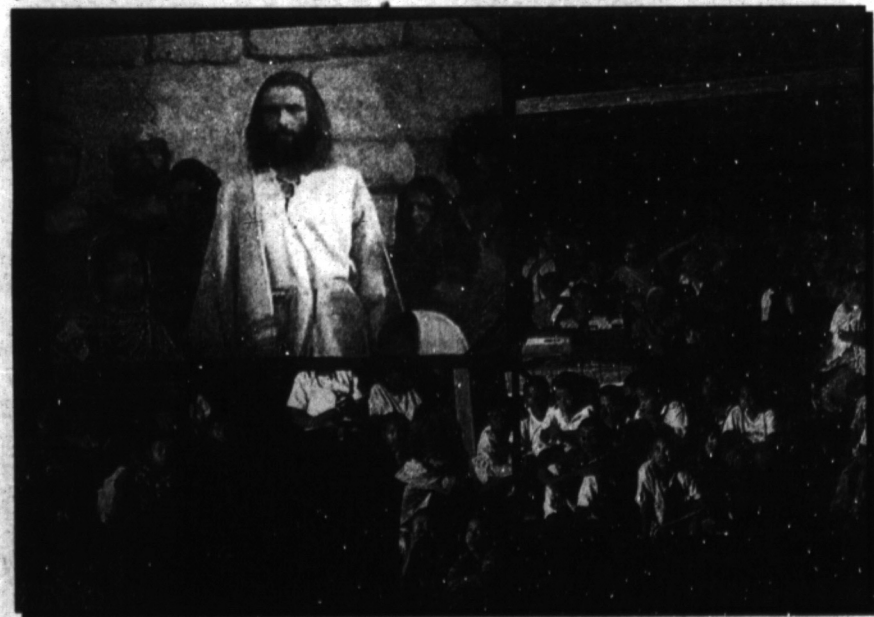
Conservatives and traditionalists in Alabama, Arizona, Idaho, Kansas, South Carolina, Texas and Virginia say they will work for passage of an amendment in their respective state in the coming year.

Three additional states — Massachusetts, Tennessee and Wisconsin — passed amendments in the last legislative session and must pass them once more before sending them to voters.

Most of the new amendments would go on the ballot in 2006, although at least one — Kansas' — could see a vote as soon as 2005.

Already, more than one-third of the states (17) have marriage amendments. By 2006, that number could top 25 — half of the states.

NOW ONLINE — More than 197 million people have made decisions to follow Christ while viewing the JESUS film, which is celebrating 25 years of ministry. The movie now can be viewed on the Internet in more than 300 languages at www.JesusFilm.org. The 300-plus translations available online represent the heart language of more than 90 percent of the world's population. (BP photo by Roy M. Burroughs)



NAMB sends 88 new missionaries to field

STONE MOUNTAIN, Ga. (BP) — "How many missionaries do we have here today?" Edwin Lamb asked as he looked out over the crowd gathered at Mountain Park First Church. Seated before him were 88 North American Mission Board (NAMB) missionaries and about 800 friends and members of the suburban Atlanta church.

As a few hands slowly began to rise, the deacon quickly responded, "That's right, raise those hands. We are all missionaries, today and every day."

Those comments as Lamb led the congregation in the opening prayer set the tone for NAMB's November 7 missionary commissioning service. As missionaries introduced themselves and gave a brief summary of their ministry, the point was subtly and repeatedly driven home — God has called all believers to be on mission for Him wherever they live.

While an emotional ceremony for the missionaries and their families, the event was especially meaningful for Samuel and Rebecca Caballero of Colorado. They were being commissioned along with their son and daughter-in-law, Fernando and Donna Caballero. While the older couple will serve in Denver in church planting among a variety of ethnic groups, the younger couple will be statewide missionaries for multiethnic church planting.

"Dad and I have always worked together since I was 13. That's when he first asked me to play the guitar for one

of the new churches he was starting," Fernando Caballero said. "It's a real joy to be serving with him and mom as missionaries in Colorado."

In his testimony, Samuel Caballero explained how he and Rebecca would be working among the 39 ethnic groups in Denver. With more than 100 languages spoken in the city, the challenge would be daunting without the prayers of Southern Baptists around the world, he added.

Caballero and his wife have started 18 churches in the past 31 years in Colorado and look forward to being used of God to start even more. But he emphasized the need for more laborers to be called alongside them in the harvest.

"We are praying for you to respond to the call of God on your life, just like we read in Luke 10. We need you to join us in the harvest on the mission field, wherever that might be. If God has placed a burden on your heart, respond today to His calling. You will never regret your decision."

The dual commissioning was the first for NAMB, missionary mobilization team director Jane Bishop said.

NAMB President Robert E. (Bob) Reccord told the crowd that the world of 2004 is identical to the world when Christ walked the dusty streets of Israel. It's a world caught up in its own pursuits and is in just as big of a need for a Savior. In comparing the two worlds, Reccord noted that with all of



FAMILY AFFAIR — Samuel Caballero was one of 88 new North American missionaries commissioned November 7, along along with his wife, son, and daughter-in-law. The family will be starting new Southern Baptist churches in Colorado. (Photo courtesy of NAMB)

the decadence and self-absorption, in a matter of months the Christian church exploded from a handful of disciples to more than 50,000 believers.

"In Acts 11:19 we read about the church going to the uttermost parts of the world. I want you to know that those who went were those laypersons who were sitting in the pews, just like you are doing today," he said.

Reccord then said the church encountered such phenomenal success because it was focused on its mission. "I

want to remind you that the church does not exist for those who sit in the pews; it exists for those who do not yet sit in the pews. It exists to reach those who have not yet been reached with the Good News."

Southern Baptists' newest missionaries will join more than 5,100 current NAMB missionaries who serve in every state, province and territory in the United States and Canada, supported by gifts through the Cooperative Program and the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering.

Analysis: Jesus film, 25 years old, going strong

By Erich Bridges
International Mission Board

RICHMOND, Va. (BP) — Recently I participated with other volunteers in distributing the Gospel on the streets of a sprawling mega-city in Central Asia. We struck up conversations with shopkeepers, cafe owners, college students, bus passengers, and anyone else willing to talk to us in the overwhelmingly Muslim city. We prayed for opportunities to give our new acquaintances

small packets containing a New Testament, a video showing local followers of Christ and how they worship — and a DVD version of the Jesus film.

Not everyone took our gift. Some declined politely; a few returned it after looking it over. But many accepted it with curiosity, gratitude, even emotion. They seemed eager to read, hear and see all they could about Jesus. Several asked for extra packets.

Almost anywhere you find the Gospel — and people hungry for it — you'll find the Jesus film. It's by far the most-watched and most-translated movie in history. It's also one of the church's most potent evangelism tools. The film, which first appeared in theaters in 1979, is marking the 25th year of its amazing run. The Jesus Film Project, an arm of Campus Crusade for Christ, distributes various versions worldwide. A few Jesus statistics (updated Oct. 1) will give you a feel for its global reach:

- Cumulative viewing/listening audience (includes multiple viewings) since 1979: more than 5.8 billion people.
- Languages with Jesus film/audio translations: 874,

with 229 more in the works.

- Countries where the film has been shown: 228.
- Countries where the film has been broadcast on television: 176.

Jesus film prints, videocassettes, DVDs, and VCDs in circulation: more than 510 million.

Personal decisions to follow Christ at public film showings: more than 197 million.

There's no slowing down on the horizon. In addition to its availability in tailored versions for various formats and age groups, the Jesus film just made its Internet debut. In October the entire film became accessible online — in more than 300 languages — via streaming video at www.JesusFilm.org.

What is the continuing power of this movie? When people see the Jesus film, they see Jesus — and understand His words — often for the first time.

"Jesus speaks our language!" One elderly woman in Mozambique joyously cried

after seeing the first showing of the Jesus film in her Makhwa language. International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries spearheaded the Makhwa version of the film and saw thousands come to Christ among the five-million-member animistic people group.

As missionaries "continue to push into people groups that have little literacy and no Bible knowledge, it's requiring them to re-think using the (Jesus) film," IMB media strategist Mark Snowden notes. "In many places, they delay showing the film until basic concepts of God, sin and redemption are understood by the people. Otherwise, in places where ancestors or other gods are worshiped, the people will just add Jesus to their pantheon of gods."

When those concepts are effectively communicated first, the film is increasingly becoming "a discipleship tool for new believers," Snowden adds. "They view Jesus' life and readily identify with the disciples who are seeking to follow Jesus."

Happy 25th birthday to the Jesus film. May your influence increase!



Bridges

"CLINIC" OPENS

Editor:

Planned Parenthood has recently opened a "health clinic" on Highway 49 just south of Hattiesburg. This organization seeks to portray itself as moderate, and interested only in educating young people. Their world view, however, is very different from that of most Baptists.

Please encourage your reader to go to an online search engine and type in, "Planned Parenthood," or visit their web site at www.plannedparenthood.org. As Christians, we must not be ignorant as to the philosophy and purpose of this organization.

In their rush to protect young people from pregnancy which would result in birth, they advocate and encourage many types of sexual encounters. They also "counsel" young people on any and all types of sexual questions. Although it is true that they sometimes do refer expectant mothers to adoption services, the vast majority of their referrals are for abortions. The majority of their clients are girls between the ages of 15-24.

They are under no obligation to inform parents that their children have been "counseled" at

their clinics. They are not held accountable for the results of the behaviors that they teach and encourage. They are free to refer expectant mothers for abortions, hand out birth control, and promote their philosophies regarding sex and abortion.

The new "clinic" on Highway 49 is a very real danger to the girls of Forrest County. Because what they teach and promote is antithetical to the Christian world view, it is a very real threat to us all.

Sylvia McCracken
Clinton

SEEKING INFO

Editor:

I am doing research on the influence of the Christian faith and use of the Bible in public schools in Mississippi in the 1900s. The practice many have mentioned to me that fascinates me was the requirement that many public school teachers in years past had, that their students answer roll call each day by quoting a Bible verse. The practice of having school assemblies where the whole school would sing Christian hymns and have local pastors to come on a weekly basis to preach the Bible to all of the students is

another common activity that is now considered a federal crime.

I would like to record for future generations those practices that for now are unfortunately censored and forbidden in public schools. If you were in public schools in the days when we had more freedom of religion and when school boards weren't scared to death of the ACLU, and you have information that would shed light on the use of the Bible and the incorporation of biblical truth in public school textbooks, please contact me at hischild60@gmail.com. Telephone: (601) 477-9333 (work), or (601) 477-9060 (home).

David Allen, pastor
West Ellisville Church
Ellisville

THANKS FOR HELP

Editor:

As most of your readers know, Florida has been hard-hit by hurricanes this year. On September 15-16, the Florida Panhandle was devastated by Hurricane Ivan. Having lived on the Mississippi and Florida Gulf coasts for that past 25 years, I must say this was the worst I have seen in all this time.

On my church field alone, 27 families lost their homes and almost every other home suffered significant damage. When we emerged from our hiding places, we were absolutely awed by the destruction we saw! Trees, houses, fences, highways, bridges, gas stations, grocery stores, and power lines had been destroyed. We hardly knew where to start.

Who should come to our rescue? Baptists! They came from everywhere — including Mississippi. They brought food, ice, water, gas, chainsaws, encouragement, and helping hands. At our church, we were recipients of gifts from First Church, Long Beach; Strayhorn Church, Sarah; and First Church, Senatobia.

It is impossible to find the words adequate to express our gratitude to these wonderful

folks. With the loving help of so many, we are gradually digging out of the mud and rubble that Ivan left behind.

I was proud to tell my congregation that these wonderful helpers were from Mississippi Baptist churches. Truly, Mississippi Baptists have touched Florida. I always knew that the most generous and caring folks in the world were Mississippians. Thank you for loving us through the storm and coming to help us in the Name of Jesus.

David W. Spencer, pastor
First Church, Milton, Fla.

FRIENDS NEEDED

Editor:

The Fellowship of Baptist Educators will soon be receiving about 2,000 letters from Chinese students in grades of 7-12 who are taking English. Each letter will be written in English and addressed, "To My American Friend." The Baptist educators group is looking for Christian young people who will volunteer to answer letters, using guidelines and instructions that will be provided.

It makes a good missions activity for Sunday School classes, Acteens or Challengers groups, World Changers, and any other Christian group. Many have had the opportunity to share their faith with a Chinese pen pal, and since the letters are often read in class when they are received in China, they can impact a whole room full of students.

The letters will arrive from China during December and will be sent to those requesting them shortly after January 15. Deadline for receiving requests is January 15.

Direct all requests for letters to Dr. John T. Carter, Executive Director, Fellowship of Christian Educators, Samford University Box 292305, Birmingham, AL 35229. Telephone: (205) 822-4106. E-mail: jfcarter@juno.com.

John T. Carter
Birmingham



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Unsigned letters will not be printed. No multi-copy or form letters will be used.

Each correspondent must include an address and telephone number for verification. In special instances, name may be withheld at writer's request and editor's discretion.

Please include the name of cooperating Mississippi Baptist church where correspondent is a member. (Mississippi Baptists' letters will receive priority when space is limited.)

Letters must be limited to 250 words. All correspondence is subject to editing.

Correspondents should refrain from personal attacks. The opinions expressed in letters to the editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board.

No more than one letter from any individual will be printed during a three-month period.

When in the judgement of the editor a given issue has received sufficient attention, correspondence dealing with it will no longer be published and a notice will be printed to that effect.

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FBC CABOT, ARKANSAS IS SEEKING full-time Associate pastor for worship and music. Seminary, contemporary/traditional, technology, people skills, plus experience. Music search committee, PO Box 1023, Cabot, AR 72023. Visit www.fbccabot.org.

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MINISTER OF MUSIC AND YOUTH: Aliceville First Baptist Church is seeking a full-time minister to serve and equip our church in music and youth ministries. Please send resumes to search committee, 323 Broad Street, Aliceville, AL 35442. Or call (205) 373-2386 for more information.

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FAMILY BIBLE STUDY

Be Thankful

Psalm 65:1-13

By Geneva England

The Oriental lilies spiral heavenly with their vibrant blossoms. The graceful mockingbird fusses around in protection of its nestlings. The morning air is sweet and free. I am an American, a citizen of the most advanced technological country, affording the best overall living standards in the world. I enjoy rights and privileges never before extended to people, especially women. I choose the church in which to worship my God.

Yes, I rejoice every time I reenter the boundaries of America, but, more importantly, I shout thanks to God for all the gifts He has given me and my country.

I, an undeserving sinner, am heir to the Kingdom of God. I am a king and priest (Rev. 1:6), and a saint (Eph. 1:18), not because I'm saintly or priestly, but because my Savior

imputes those blessings to me—and to every believer. Praise God!

Psalm 65, a harvest hymn written by David, thanks God for all the rains that allowed the Israelites to gather a bountiful harvest. Since they were basically an agricultural people, this blessing would be especially memorable. David particularly mentions the plentiful grains and the overflowing grasslands of the desert (vv. 10-12). God hears the prayers of both thankfulness and petition [request for forgiveness] (vv. 2-3).

I. FORGIVENESS (PSALM 65:1-4)

When David penned this psalm, he had already received forgiveness for many transgressions and enjoyed many blessings that God had bestowed upon him personally. To think that David had risen from a lowly shepherd



England

boy from Bethlehem to become the King of Israel enthroned in Jerusalem shows how God is in charge of all destinies.

David, in return, vowed his faithfulness to God, his benefactor. He knew that God does, indeed, hear and answer prayers (v. 2) since he could testify to the many times God had rescued him, such as from danger at the hand of Saul and from the sinful mire of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband.

David's song rings of the overwhelming goodness of God—not just for the plentiful harvest, but for the special position the Israelites enjoyed as God's chosen people and the repeated forgiveness of their sins. In contrast to human sinfulness, David wrote of "the good things of [God's] house," of His "holy" temple (v. 4, NIV). People of David's time, as well as people of the twenty-first century, should understand that all good things come from the Lord. We are the epitome of sin in contrast to God's supreme holiness.

II. HOPE (PSALM 65:9-13)

Hope sets Christians apart from unbelievers. We trust the promises that God has made throughout the Bible. We confidently believe that the promises and predictions recorded in both the Old and New Testaments will come to pass. We have a lot of evidence already available to substantiate our hope. Remember the promises made to Adam and Eve and their fulfillment (Gen. 3); the promise made to Abraham to become the father of a great nation; the promise to the Hebrew nation to bring it out of Egypt; and the promise to the scattered Jews to reunite the nation of Israel [accomplished in 1948]—and many, many more. Yet, the greatest promise alluded to by the Old Testament writers was the coming of a savior, accomplished with the birth of Jesus. Thus, how could anyone doubt Jesus' promise to return?

In verse 5, God our Savior is defined as "the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas" (emphasis added). Although David's immediate goal was to show that God's presence could be felt even by the maritime sailors, his prophetic comment

extends his limited vision of humanity far beyond. Individuals across the globe who believe that God gave His only begotten son so that they might believe in His name and have everlasting life fit into David's vision of hope for those from "the farthest seas."

III. PROVISIONS (PSALM 65:9-13)

Again, praise God that His provision for our salvation is absolute. Additionally, God's blessings are enjoyed through nature: the alluvial deltas and fertile slopes, the mineral rich mountains, and the treasures from the seas all yield harvests of bountifulness for our consumption and enjoyment. The meadows lift their leafy blades in thankfulness to the Father of showers and streams: "they shout for joy and sing" (v. 13, NIV). Indeed, God is the Provider for all creation—plant and animal kingdoms, and the heavens and earth.

Humankind needs the provisions of nature to live physically; they need the provisions of God to live spiritually. Praise God!

England is a member of First Church, Grenada.

EXPLORE THE BIBLE

A New Priority

Luke 12:15-31

By James Walters

In this week's lesson, making God's will and way a priority is the focus. The Kingdom of God is to be predominant in all we do. We are to evaluate activities and involvements on the basis of whether or not they contribute spiritually to enriching us and adding to our spiritual muscle mass.

We probably know someone who is selfish to the core. They have made their felt needs the number one priority of life. There are others, however, whose example challenges us to draw even closer to God, and let Him take up more and more space in our spiritual life. Thank God for those good examples.

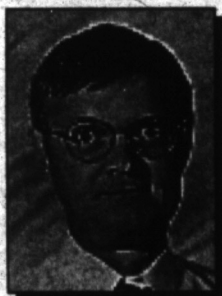
GUARD AGAINST GREED, LUKE 12:15

A man in the crowd asked Jesus to talk to his brother. Now, he was not concerned about his brother's health. The man didn't want Jesus to minister to his

brother. He asked Christ to speak to his brother and tell him to share the family fortune with him.

Jesus saw greed at work and said, "Guard against all kinds of greed." Christ told the man that life is not lived on the surplus of one's possessions. What is not used to pay the bills usually is put away in some investment account. Life is lived on the necessities. What is left over is abundance, surplus.

Perhaps most of us thank God that there is an abundance of possessions and income. But when is enough, enough? Do we buy a new suit because we need it, or because we can? Do we have a bass boat on order because we need one to survive, or because we have surplus income to spend? Based on the teaching of Christ, wanting more material things on our plate than we could possibly consume is greed in the making. We are to be on guard



Walters

against the encroachment of greed.

POSSESSIONS AREN'T PERMANENT, LUKE 12:16-21

Jesus told a parable of a foolish rich man. Not all rich men are smart. Christ pointed out that the consequences will be the same for all those who are rich in everything except a relationship with God. The consequence of greatest significance is that all our wealth in material goods will be left behind when we die. Having no spiritual account with God will prove to be the worst form of bankruptcy.

In the parable, a wealthy man was blessed with an abundant harvest. Since he was in total control, meaning no interference from God, he decided to expand. By doing so, he created a greater capacity to hoard abundance. His mistake was not seeing his impoverished spiritual condition. Unaware of the future, he had no corresponding sense of urgency to address spiritual priorities. He died. Someone else benefited from his improvements. He stood before God penniless, with no one to blame for his spiritual poverty, but his own flawed value system.

WORRY IS WASTED EFFORT, LUKE 12:22-28

The story is told of a fictitious knight going on a journey. He loaded pots and pans because he worried that he might need to prepare his own meals. He carried a change or two of armor, worrying some damage might ruin the one he was wearing. Out of worry, he added a sack or two of extra feed for his horse in case there wasn't good grazing for his animal. He even included sun screen and shades along with his bathing suit in case he came upon a beach where he could get a tan. He loaded his generator, TV, computer, printer, cell phone, and a book or two for leisure time. After gathering up everything he thought he might need he started on his journey. He weighed a ton! The first bridge he came to gave way under the weight of all his excess baggage. He drowned because he had forgotten to pack a life preserver!

However good we may be at anticipating the future, something unforeseen almost always occurs. It does for me, anyway. The best way to live is in confidence God will take care of us. We should be reasonably prepared for what may come our way, but wallowing in worry over whether we

have left anything out is wearying. Our prayer time can become little more than time spent worrying on our knees, trying to ask specifically for what we might need, as if, should we leave anything out, we're sunk.

CONCENTRATE ON THE KINGDOM, LUKE 12:29-31

Food, clothing and shelter are necessities. Imagine these basic necessities being regarded as secondary. Jesus does. Many of us never get past the necessities to the essentials. Essentials have to do with what is needed in order to be who we are. We are more than coats and bowls of soup. We are more than people who live in two-car garages.

"The heathen spend their time worrying about what they will wear or what they will eat," Jesus said, "Don't be like them." God knows us well enough to know we need things. But He has more than a cursory knowledge of us. Human beings need more than survival. We must have purpose. Perhaps, we are never at our best until we are sacrificing the necessities for the essentials. God bless us!

Walters is member of Temple Church, Hattiesburg.

Guidelines for submitting news and photographs

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message body of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, attachments will be accepted

Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and

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All news items are subject to editing, and

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Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis. Requests to return photographs must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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Gifts of Honor and Memory

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

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SWEET POTATO KINGS — Mr. Jerrell Flemming and Rev. Jeff Gilder, pastor of Pleasant Grove BC in Woodland, delivered 18 cases of sweet potatoes for the residents of The BCV. The sweet potatoes were donated by farmers in Calhoun County.

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Ellaen Herron
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As you reflect this Thanksgiving season on the blessing of family and friends, perhaps there is someone in particular that God has used to touch your life in a special way. A gift given to **THE BAPTIST CHILDREN'S VILLAGE** in honor or memory of that special person would be an honor to their legacy while giving a child an opportunity to experience the very special gift of family. Please complete the following form and send it with your donation to:

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Hispanic Dems want party to move to values

MIAMI (BP) — When President Bush received nine percent more of the Hispanic vote this year than four years ago, some of those Hispanics were changing their vote over key social issues because they believe the Democratic Party has abandoned the views of its base in pursuit of an extremist agenda.

"I think the election has served a great purpose to let the whole nation know there is a significant number of Americans who are very interested in the preservation of certain values that have served as the moral foundation for our country," Marcos Antonio Ramos, a registered Democrat and pastor of Iglesia Bautista Calvario in Miami, told Baptist Press — but now that Bush's second term is secured, Hispanics, like many Americans, expect him to uphold his stances on issues such as abortion, faith-based initiatives and marriage.

"We expect that the [Bush] administration will be grateful to those Americans that voted for the administration despite certain weaknesses or certain deficiencies that we have perceived in the last four years," he said, "but the votes have been cast to project a better moral picture for our country."

Bibliocipher

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KZQ SX AVG KHH FAKF
SYHVYPY KUY IREFVCVYQ
CULG KHH FAVZBE,
CULG TAVMA XY MLRHQ
ZLF SY IREFVCVYQ SX
FAY HKT LC GLEYE.

KMFE FAVUFYYZ:
FAVUFXZVZY

Clue: S = B

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Philippians 1:6

Gambling proposals fare poorly with voters

WASHINGTON (BP) — Pro-gambling forces went down to defeat in at least four states November 2, which a longtime opponent called a possible "tipping point" in the fight against gambling.

Tom Grey, executive director of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling (NCALG), said gambling proponents have now lost ballot proposals in at least five states this year and won only one. That follows turning back 43 of 46 attempts to expand gambling in 2003, he said.

"These results indicate there is a backlash of 'Enough is enough,'" Grey said of the losing attempts for casino and slot machine expansion.

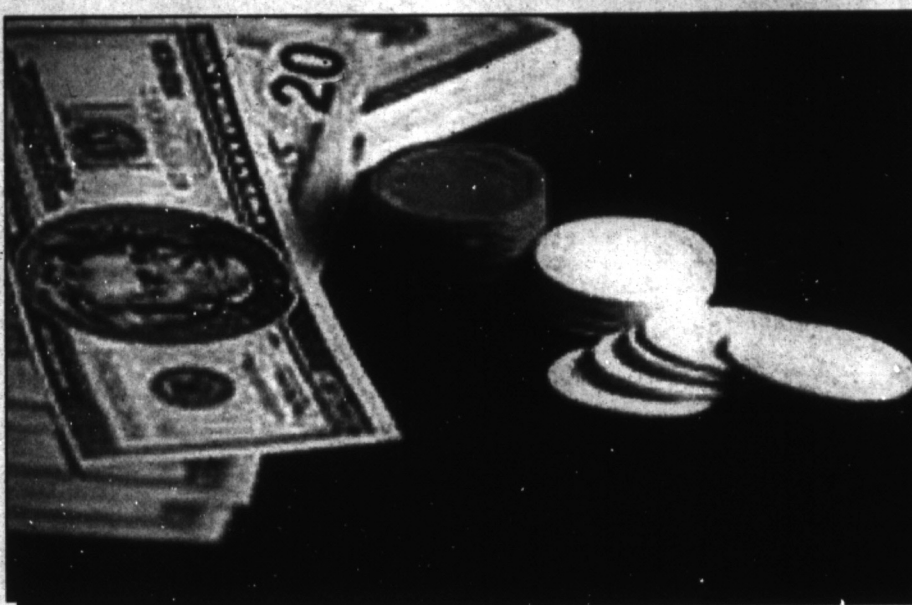
"[Gambling interests] haven't been able to deliver on their promises. They can't say, 'We've gambled ourselves rich in California, so let's add more.'"

On election day, voters in California, Nebraska, and Washington turned down attempts to establish casinos or slot machine parlors, install slots at betting facilities or expand gambling options, while a vote in Florida remained too close to call Wednesday morning. In addition, Michigan residents approved a constitutional amendment that requires voter approval of any proposed gambling expansion in the future.

The only pro-gambling result came in Oklahoma, where voters adopted a lottery by a 65-35% margin.

An official with the Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission echoed Grey's comments, saying citizens are seeing the flaws behind gambling.

"Most Americans know someone whose life has been significantly affected by a gambling problem," said Barrett Duke, vice president for public policy and research in the ERLC's Washington, D.C. office. "They are no longer interested in continuing to expand gambling and all the problems that



go with it. While the public has been willing to try it as a means to economic revitalization, they have discovered the industry's promises aren't fulfilled, Duke said.

"The only people enriched by gambling are the gambling establishments and those few businesses that support them," Duke said. "Everyone else suffers. The American people were willing to give it a try but I think they're finding out that there's no content behind the promise."

A pair of grassroots leaders whose groups defeated statewide initiatives in Nebraska and Washington were ecstatic over the outcomes. "We are absolutely thrilled," said Pat Loontjier, executive director of Nebraska's Gambling With The Good Life. "We were outspent 25-1 and still pulled it off. We said, 'If we can pull it off, it'll be a miracle.' We were giving God the glory all night." The Omaha-based citizens group got a visible boost from Nancy Osborne, wife of U.S. Rep. Tom Osborne, formerly the football coach at the University of Nebraska.

Five churches donated \$40,000 to the organization, with much of the money used to air TV commercials featuring the coach's wife.

In Washington, where voters turned down a proposal to authorize additional electronic scratch ticket machines, a church leader said voters will hold officials accountable for supporting future gambling expansion.

"Even under the guise of reducing property taxes, voters rejected this initiative because they did not want 2,000 casinos with slot machines in their neighborhoods," said John Boonstra, executive minister with the Seattle-based Washington Association of Churches.

"The kind of gambling envisioned in this initiative does not reflect the vision of a just and caring community that

seeks to build its social fabric," Boonstra added. "Gambling preys upon the poor and disproportionately affects their lives."

Despite the encouraging results, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission's Duke warned the battle will continue. Until a social stigma is again attached to gambling, its proponents will continue to push for more kinds of gambling, he said.

However, Duke is encouraged that the American people have come to the place where they do not want to see more gambling. "Soon the opportunity will be there for those of us who understand how damaging gambling is to begin to eliminate some forms of gambling in our communities."

However, churches need to be careful in expressing opposition, the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling's Grey said. Those who try to press the issue on the basis of gambling as a personal sin will lose every time, he said.

"Wherever we can get a political, social and religious coalition to go out and say, 'This is the truth about gambling, we can win,' Grey said. "The question is not about whether people gamble. It's whether we put it on Main Street and call it good."

Anti-gambling leaders in Fla. question late surge

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (BP) — Despite a late, mysterious surge that carried a gambling initiative to victory, legal challenges could forestall the onslaught of slot machines in Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

After trailing by a narrow deficit for two days after the Nov. 2 election, a constitutional amendment to permit slots in Miami-Dade and Broward county pari-mutuel facilities experienced a sudden reversal. Amendment 4 bolted to a 93,000-vote victory after being behind by 6,000-10,000 votes.

As certified by state election officials, the outcome was 3,609,754 in favor and 3,516,415 against, a margin of 50.7 to 49.3%. If Amendment 4 stands, residents of Broward and neighboring Miami-Dade will hold referendums on whether to place slots at seven race-tracks and jai alai venues.

Paul Seago, executive director of No Casinos, Inc., said the group is consulting its attorneys to consider options before a Nov. 15 deadline to challenge the results. "It certainly is an interesting coincidence that Miami-

Dade and Broward counties count absentees after the deadline and suddenly find a 90,000 vote swing in their favor," said the Orlando-based political action committee's head.

At one point Nov. 3, the vote was so close that it was rated a statistical dead heat, with the opposition's margin less than 50.1% of the total. The final 1.4% difference in proponents' favor was crucial, since an automatic recount applies if a vote passes by 0.5% or less, Seago said.

In its November 5 editions, the Orlando Sentinel reported that No Casinos chairman, state Rep. Randy Johnson, sought a recount but was turned down by local and state election officials. "Is it a coincidence this happens in a place most affected by the proposal and where there is the greatest preponderance of support?" Johnson asked.

Seago agreed the flood of absentees from Broward County that accounted for most of the reversal looks suspicious. A south Florida TV station reported November 3 that a computer glitch had left 78,000 absentee votes uncounted, with 74,000

winding up in the "yes" column. WPLG reported Broward County's software wasn't geared to count more than 32,000 votes in a precinct, leading to a massive undercount.

Instead of passing by 166,000 votes in Broward County, Amendment 4 passed by 240,000 votes, the station reported.

"It's just a little strange and represents a statistical anomaly," Seago said of the 94-6% split in the undercount. "It seems odd at the 13th hour you could find a block of votes that are that varied."

In addition to No Casinos' possible legal challenge, the director of an anti-greyhound racing group also is contemplating a lawsuit. Carey Theil of Grey2K USA said the Boston-based, national nonprofit already has challenged the petition process that put the question on the ballot and may file a second lawsuit regarding the count.

Filed in September, the first suit alleges Amendment 4 was placed before voters in a fraudulent manner. A hearing in the case is tentatively scheduled for January.

Along with the Humane Society and Floridians Against Expanded Gambling, Grey2K claims there were numerous irregularities in the petitions filed to place the measure on the ballot. For example, Theil said the names of about two dozen dead people were included in the list of approved signatures.

In a follow-up telephone survey of 5,000 people who allegedly signed the petition, 68% denied they had done so, Theil said.

Bill Bunkley, the legislative consultant for the Florida Baptist Convention, also believes the irregularities in Broward County provide grounds to contest the election.

"The No Casino folks probably need to file suit immediately because of the admission that the software couldn't count more than 32,000 votes," said Bunkley, a Tampa-based independent lobbyist.

"Because of the inability of election officials to properly tabulate the results originally, I hope they would be forthcoming about how those results were finally tabulated."